

# The Old Paths

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## "Tradition Or Tradition?"

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The word "tradition" has become somewhat of a by-word or buzz-word for many in the Lord's church. For some Christians, anything they associate with being "traditional," or with things that "we" do often, is rejected. When speaking of "traditional" things, a look and air of disdain comes upon them. They belittle those things they consider "traditional." Sometimes we find folks who wish to do things differently for no other reason than for the sake of being different. This is unfortunate.

Today, it seems that if there is anything which someone could say has been done for 'x' amount of time, then these ones are ready to throw it out, and try something "new" and "exciting." (That is, until that thing becomes a "tradition"!) Their attitude reminds me of the attitude of those Paul found at Athens (Acts 17:21). In contrast, we need to be reminded that Solomon said there is nothing for which it can be said, "See this is new" (Ecc. 1:10).

### The Word "Tradition" Needs A Context.

The reason I titled this article the way I did is because "tradition" does not always mean "tradition". In other words, just because something is a "tradition" doesn't mean we must do it. At the same time,

some things called "traditions" must be accepted and obeyed because they are commanded of God! So, how can we determine when a tradition is simply something men have done for a long time and when the tradition is something that God has commanded? Put simply, this is determined by the context! We find the English word "tradition" used seven times in the New Testament, but it is used in two very different ways. Thus, we must define "tradition" according to its Bible context. Read the passages below and contrast the way this word is used in context:

- ♦ "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?" (Matt. 15:2; Mk. 7:3, 5).
- ♦ "Why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3, 6; Mk. 7:9, 13).
- ♦ "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men" (Mk. 7:8; Col. 2:8).
- ♦ "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:14).
- ♦ "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter" (II Thess. 2:15).
- ♦ "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves

from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (II Thess. 3:6).

- ♦ "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (I Pet. 1:18).

Notice that on two occasions the word "tradition" was used with the understanding that one is expected to continue in certain things or be considered a sinner and condemned in the sight of God (II Thess. 2:15, 3:6). These "traditions" were words passed down by God through Christ, to the apostles, and then to the Christians (II Thess. 2:15; II Tim. 2:2). These are the things which must continue, regardless of whether or not men belittle them as "traditional"!

### Contrasting "Traditions"

There may be an attitude among some which says that if certain things have "always" been done, then this can never change. Such an attitude can be detrimental to a group of God's people if it is allowed to go unrestrained. Just because someone doesn't like a change does not mean that the change is sinful. (Read: Heb. 7:12-14, God changed His law) Therefore, we can have certain traditions which have been an expedient practice of men at some point in time, and then change them or omit them altogether, and there be no sin involved. Examples of this include:

- ♦ Whether or not we have a chalkboard/whiteboard or an overhead/powerpoint projector in our preaching and teaching. Though these are commonly seen in church buildings, to have or not have such tools does not constitute sin.

- ♦ The “traditional” order of services can be changed and not constitute sin so long as we do not omit what God commanded (Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42).
- ♦ Some congregations schedule their Sunday worship service and then have the Bible class afterward. Others schedule their Sunday Bible class first. Still other congregations have a Sunday AM and PM Bible class. To change, or rearrange our “traditional” order does not constitute sin.

Yet, the Bible speaks of some traditions which, if changed, would result in sin. Therefore, such things need to be left alone. For example:

- ♦ If we said that a man doing the preaching in a congregation is “traditional,” and we asked a sister to preach one day, this is sin (I Tim. 2:12).
- ♦ To add instruments to our singing, or to stop singing altogether would definitely be a change in “tradition”, but that would also constitute sin (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15).
- ♦ To declare that it is a sin to have Bible classes on Sunday, or to say that there is only one “authorized” time for such classes becomes sin as we have no right to bind where God has not bound (I Pet. 4:11). Other examples could be added to this list, we know.

### Conclusion

Before we get too “trigger-happy” putting down and changing “our traditions”, let us make sure that the traditions we are discussing are ones that we have the right to change! As we have seen, there are some traditions that we have no right or authority to change! (I Pet. 4:11; Col. 3:17)

## “Why I Am A Member Of The church Of Christ”

A.C. Grider (1912-1990)

I didn't join the church of Christ. I didn't select the church of Christ as “my choice” from among many churches. It never occurred to me that I had a choice nor that I desired to make a choice of churches.

I started thinking about my spiritual condition down in Tennessee some years ago—several years ago and made up my mind that I should do something about it. I began to consider what the Lord wanted me to do. I started to study my Bible.

I found that I was a sinner and that Christ was THE savior. I found that if I were ever saved it would only be by Christ. I considered His word relative to what to do to be saved. He said I should **repent**, Luke 13:3, I did. He said I should **confess** Him, Matthew 10:32. I did. He said I should **be baptized**, Mark 16:16. I did. He said if I would do these things I would BE SAVED. I was. But the BIBLE taught that when I was saved the Lord added me to the church, Acts 2:47. He did.

Now, WHICH CHURCH did he add me to? HIS, Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:16. Thus I am a member of the church of Christ because I had NO CHOICE and wanted none. I just wanted to be saved. And I was!

## Could It be ...

Selected

- that people reject the Bible — not because it contradicts itself, but because it contradicts them?
- that some brethren do not attend various worship periods and Bible study classes because Christ is not really their “first love?”
- that Satan has lulled us into thinking that we are really standing, when indeed, we are ready to fall?
- we utterly abhor the violence going on in the world, yet do not think twice about what our families entertain themselves with on television and at the movies?
- that some brethren honestly see no connection between commitment, attendance, and involvement?

**The most exercise some folks get is “jumping” to conclusions!**

*Remember: “The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.” (Prov. 18:17, NKJ)*

Your Bible questions answered ...  
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Sunday Worship	_____	10:45 a.m.
Sunday Worship	_____	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	_____	7:00 p.m.

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